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ABSTRACT

This annual publication presents articles on topics that were included in the 1996-97 action plan of the Virginia State Committee on Transfer (SCT), and sets the stage for the committee's work in the coming year. It presents four articles that are designed to increase understanding of student responsibilities in getting accurate transfer information, how to use the transfer module to select courses for transfer, how electronic databases can be used to facilitate transfer, and how community colleges asses the success of their transfer students. It opens with an examination of transfer, and provides an update of the current ease of transfer from the community colleges and Richard Bland College to four-year colleges and universities in Virginia. The transfer module is an excellent advising tool for students who begin classes at a Virginia Community College System institution without a clear sense of their future educational plans. This publication discusses several goals and the progress made toward meeting the SCT plan for the development of an electronic database that would ensure the efficient transmission of transfer information. Annual student performance results provided by the four-year institutions have been used to improve academic advising and modify course content and sequencing to better meet program requirements at the senior institutions and to examine trends in student enrollments. (VWC)

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Transfer in Virginia—An Update

Transfer Connection---1997

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Virginia Community College System

SCHEV STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA

TRANSFER CONNECTION

An annual publication of the State Committee on Transfer 1997

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TRANSFER IN VIRGINIA – AN UPDATE

Transfer never has been easier from the community colleges and Richard Bland College to the four-year colleges and universities in Virginia. All but one of Virginia's public four-year colleges and universities are in full compliance with the *State Policy on Transfer*. Virginia Military Institute, because of its unique mission, continues to work with the transfer committee to better facilitate transfer from the two-year institutions. Two-year college students who earn associate degrees intended for transfer are assured that they will be able to transfer with junior standing and with all lower-division general-education requirements fulfilled. Although the state policy does not guarantee admission, many four-year colleges and universities do guarantee acceptance of associate-degree graduates. Others may require a minimum grade point average for acceptance, particularly in the case of popular majors or majors with restricted enrollments.

> "Transfer never has been easier from the community colleges and Richard Bland College to the four-year colleges and universities in Virginia."

All public four-year institutions, Richard Bland College, and the Virginia Community College System have developed home pages on the World Wide Web and posted admission information pertaining to transfer students there. Students who plan to transfer to a specific four-year institution can use printed or electronic transfer guides to plan their course selections. All of Virginia's public four-year colleges and universities have printed transfer guides, and 11 of these guides are available electronically through the World Wide Web. They can be accessed at the following address:

http://www.so.cc.va.us/transfer.htm

The transfer module of the *State Policy on Transfer* continues to be another important resource for students who plan to transfer from two-year colleges and want to be assured that the 35 credits they take will be accepted to most four-year colleges and universities in Virginia as complete or partial fulfillment of their lower-level general-education requirements. The state policy with its listing of transfer module courses is also accessible on the World Wide Web through the State Council of Higher Education and the Virginia Community College home pages.

Encouraged by the *State Policy*, representatives of the four-year institutions met with the community college counselors at their annual fall conference. This meeting provided an opportunity for the counselors to receive timely information on transfer throughout the state and led to a productive discussion of ways in which the transfer process can be enhanced for community-college students.

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In addition to the traditional transfer opportunities that are available to students, there has been significant growth in the number of non-traditional options for transferring associate-in-applied-science degrees. The development of distance-learning bachelor's degree programs and cooperative articulation agreements between specific four-year and community colleges has increased the transfer options for community-college students who have followed applied-degree programs.

In the coming year, the State Committee on Transfer will continue to interpret and implement the transfer policy but will concentrate more of its work on communication. The committee will offer assistance to institutions as they make transfer information available through the World Wide Web. Transfer guides will be further refined to provide accurate and easily accessible information to students. Chief transfer officers from all institutions will be invited to attend one of the committee's meetings to enhance communication and to deal with specific issues. A pilot project for the electronic transmission of transcripts between community colleges and four-year institutions will continue. Partnerships and agreements between the state's secondary schools and institutions of higher education will continue to be explored. In addition, the committee will sponsor meetings throughout the Commonwealth to give students, faculty, and others the opportunity to share their ideas and concerns about the transfer process.

This newsletter presents articles on topics that were included in the 1996-97 action plan of the State Committee on Transfer and sets the stage for the committee's work in the coming year. Articles are designed to increase understanding of student responsibilities in getting accurate transfer information, how to use the transfer module to select courses for transfer, how electronic databases can be used to facilitate transfer, and finally, how community colleges assess the success of their transfer students.

But Nobody Told Me That *Student Responsibilities in Getting Accurate Transfer Information*

Q. What are my responsibilities as a student under this policy?

First, make sure that your counselor or advisor is aware of your intent to transfer when you select or change your program of study at the community college. You should read the *State Policy* and discuss it with a counselor or advisor so that you understand the scope and the limitations of what the policy provides. Pay particular attention to the difference between transferring as a graduate of a two-year transfer degree program and transferring after completion of 35 credits from the *Transfer Module*. (See related article on the Transfer Module.)

Second, you should choose as early as possible the senior institution(s) to which you are interested in applying for admission and familiarize yourself with their requirements. You need to take responsibility for planning your course of study to meet those requirements and for seeking out the information and advice that is necessary to develop such a plan. Delays in developing and following an appropriate plan or changes in plans (e.g., change in major) may reduce the applicability of transfer credit to the degree program that you ultimately select.

Q. How can I get a copy of the *State Policy on Transfer*?

Your counselor or advisor has a copy of the *State Policy*, and the full text of the policy is also accessible on the World Wide Web through the State Council of Higher Education and the Virginia Community College System home pages.

Q. How can I get accurate information on what courses will transfer before I apply?

You now have access to a number of reliable sources of information on transfer. The *State Policy* recognizes that transfer guides are one of the most important methods by which baccalaureate-bound students can plan an appropriate program of study at a two-year college. Each of the four-year public colleges and universities in Virginia has a transfer guide that will give you accurate information on course equivalencies and in some cases, how the courses apply toward meeting requirements at the senior institution. Eleven of Virginia's 15 four-year public institutions have made their transfer guides accessible on the World Wide Web at the following address: http://www.so.cc.va.us/transfer.htm. Your counselor or advisor can give you assistance in reading and understanding the guides. If a course does not appear in the college's transfer guide, it is likely that no credit will be awarded; however, you are encouraged to check with the institution's chief transfer officer when you have specific questions.

Q. Who is the chief transfer officer and what is his/her responsibility?

Consistent with the *State Policy*, each two-year and four-year institution has a designated chief transfer officer (CTO). His/her responsibilities include interpreting the *State Policy on Transfer*; distributing transfer information, including transfer guides; and keeping counselors and advisors up-to-date on transfer information.

Q. How do I find out who the chief transfer officer is at each institution?

SCHEV maintains a home page with an up-to-date list of who the chief transfer officer is at each institution. If you have access to the Internet, the address is:

http://www.schev.edu/wuacadpg/trans.html

Additionally, you can contact the institutions and request the name of their CTO.

Q. How can I get more information about the four-year institutions?

You can contact the admission office at the four-year institution(s) to request a copy of the transfer guide and application materials. Most institutions now have a home page on the Internet with additional information on deadlines and procedures for filing an application, but admission offices can be contacted by telephone, e-mail, or by mail to request materials.

Each fall, public and private four-year college representatives travel the entire state of Virginia to attend college fairs. You can check with your two-year college counselor to see when the college fair is scheduled in your area. If the college fair at your two-year college is not convenient, there are also college fairs held at local area high schools that might better fit your schedule. In addition, many two-year colleges sponsor transfer activities that include visits to local four-year colleges, and in some cases, on-site transcript evaluation and admission to selected senior institutions right on the two-year college campus.

You are encouraged to make plans to visit the four-year colleges in which you are interested. The office of admissions can tell you when visits are scheduled at their institution. The financial aid office, residence life office, or the office for off-campus living are also good places to spend some time to get answers to your questions. Make the most of your visit!

Q. How can I get more information about specific majors?

Consistent with the *State Policy*, a person at each school or college at the four-year institution, typically someone within each dean's office, has been designated as a person with final authority on transferability of courses in the major. You are encouraged to visit with faculty in the department of the major you've selected to learn more about the specific requirements of that major.

Q. When can I expect to find out which courses transfer and how they are counted?

Encouraged by the *State Policy*, four-year institutions provide students who transfer with a formal evaluation of their transfer credits prior to their initial registration. The four-year institution will provide information on transferring and a time-table when you can expect to hear a decision on your application. Once you receive your acceptance, be sure to request a final transcript from your two-year college indicating the final grades you've received. Your final transcript should have certification if you've completed the *Transfer Module* or the associate degree. If you are seeking credit for Advanced Placement tests you've taken, also request AP scores from the College Board to be sent to the four-year colleges or universities.

Q. If there is a dispute or disagreement on the transfer of credit, what is the course of action?

If a student who has transferred from a two-year public college encounters problems with course credits, waiver of general education, or any other problems related to transferring, the student should contact the CTO at the four-year institution to request assistance.

The Transfer Module of the *State Policy on Transfer*

The *State Policy on Transfer* was intended to provide certain guarantees to graduates of Virginia's public, two-year college transfer-degree programs. Although two-year colleges recommend that students complete the associate degree before transferring to a senior institution, many students choose to transfer before graduating. To provide these students with some guarantees about the acceptability of the courses they take, and to provide some direction for students who do not have clear educational goals, the transfer module was developed as a limited but structured program of study that meets many of the general-education requirements at four-year institutions.

The State Committee on Transfer developed a list of Virginia Community College System (VCCS) courses that form the foundation of a solid liberal arts education for college students. This list of 72 courses, known as the *Transfer Module of the State Policy on Transfer*, was approved by the State Committee on Transfer in 1994. The list includes selected VCCS courses that meet a large portion of the institutional requirements for general education in at least 80% of the four-year public colleges and universities. The Virginia Community College System began certifying students as completers of the transfer module in December 1994.

The transfer module is not intended to represent the full set of general-education courses required for a degree, but it is an excellent advising tool for students who begin classes at a VCCS institution without a clear sense of their future educational plans. The following are answers to some of the most commonly asked questions concerning the use of the transfer module:

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Virginia Community College System

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Q. Who is the transfer module intended for?

The course options listed in the transfer module represent the type of course work that is generally completed during the first and second year of a four-year degree program. Completing transfer module courses is a good choice for students who are undecided about the major they wish to pursue or the institution they wish to attend. The transfer module includes courses in English, science, humanities, history, social sciences, and mathematics that are accepted for credit toward meeting most general-education requirements at senior institutions. VCCS students who are pursuing an associate of applied arts degree program can combine the transfer module with their occupational-technical courses as one option to improve transfer opportunities.

Q. What if I want to take courses not listed in the transfer module?

Great idea! Taking courses that sound interesting is often a good way to test your academic and career interest in a particular subject area. The VCCS colleges offer a broad variety of traditionally transferable courses that are well worth exploring. The courses listed in the transfer module are not intended to represent the full set of general-education courses available or to provide a complete list of transferable courses; rather, the module is an advising tool for students trying to make decisions about which courses to take during their first year.

Q. Are there other courses that should be completed during the first year at the VCCS institution that are not listed in the transfer module?

Foreign language and computer courses may need to be included. Some senior institutions and most Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree programs require that students demonstrate a foreign language competency. Knowledge of computers and the ability to use them is also encouraged by most institutions. Additionally, many senior-college programs have specific mathematics and science sequences required or recommended for particular majors. A community-college transfer advisor can help students make appropriate choices.

Q. What if I don't successfully complete all 35 credits of the transfer module?

Four-year institutions award a block of 35 general-education credits if the module is completed. If not, the senior institution will still give a student credit on a course-by-course basis for courses completed according to the VCCS course equivalency tables printed in the four-year colleges' transfer guide. In some cases, the senior institution will award general-education courses only where the sequence of courses is completed. In any case, a grade of C or better must be earned in each course transferred whether or not the module is completed.

Q. How will four-year colleges know I have completed the transfer module?

The community college prints a statement on the students' academic transcript certifying thst the transfer module has been completed. Students should request that this transcript be sent to the four-year institution when the student applies for admission, or after 35 credits of module courses have been completed.

Q. Can I use transfer courses from other than VCCS colleges to count toward module cokmpletion?

No, all courses must be completed in a Virginia community college for the policy to apply.

A Plan for the Electronic Transmission of Transfer Information in Virginia

On January 29, 1996, the *State Committee on Transfer* (SCT) announced a plan for the development of an electronic database that would ensure the efficient transmission of transfer information. At that time, the State Policy on Transfer addressed this issue as follows:

The current transfer guides do not make use of available technology for the efficient transmission of information. Therefore, the state should establish an on-line electronic database in an interactive format that assists prospective students in making course selections in such a way as to maximize transferable credits to the senior institution.

In the announcement, several goals or actions were recommended to achieve this desired result. Those goals and progress toward meeting those goals is discussed below.

It was recommended that all four-year public institutions of higher education should place their transfer guides on the Internet and make access to the guides possible through the institution's home page on the World Wide Web. This goal is nearing completion. We are pleased to report that 11 of the 15 senior institutions have now placed their transfer guides on the Web, with access provided through their home pages. Institutions are encouraged to make these guides easily accessible in their institution's web structure. For some institutions the location of the transfer guide is readily apparent to an outsider browsing the institutions' web pages. Other institutions are being encouraged to make the guide's location more easily found. To facilitate ready access to the guides, the VCCS web page now links the exact location of the guides in each institution's web structure. This allows all VCCS students and counselors to easily find the guides for each institution. The transfer guides can be accessed at: http://www.so.cc.va.us/transfer.htm

The guides that are available electronically reflect the unique nature of each institution. However, each school has complied with the guidelines for transfer guides as suggested by SCT. The guides on the web each have a course-by-course equivalency listing between the VCCS' and the institution's courses. Since these listings are part of the institutions web structure, they are easily maintained and kept current by staff at the institution. This is a clear advantage in resource use over a centralized database that would have been maintained in Richmond (as suggested in an early model for the electronic database).

The SCT notes with considerable pleasure that resources have been allocated within the VCCS to ensure direct student, faculty, and counselor access to the Internet on all of its campuses. Without this piece of the initiative, the work being done at the senior institutions to provide the information electronically would have been an exercise in futility.

Efforts are underway to incorporate some interactive components into this electronic transmission of information. At the College of William & Mary, for example, VCCS students and counselors will be given interactive access to the college's degree-audit program. This interactive capability will allow a student to enter courses taken at a VCCS school into a degree-audit page on W&M's web structure. The college's degree-audit will then use these classes to determine what degree requirements have been met and what requirements must still be met. This information will either be made available in real time to the student, or will be run in a batch process at the end of the day with results sent to the student's e-mail address at the VCCS campus. Planning is also underway to allow for the transmission of Speede formatted electronic transcripts from the VCCS school to W&M. The special module accessory to the degree-audit would read the transcript directly and reply through e-mail to the student with a degree analysis of the student's courses. Thus students and counselors at the VCCS campus will always have the capability for an immediate analysis of a VCCS student's progress in a degree program at William & Mary. It is hoped that some interactive components relevant to transfer will be made available within all senior institution's web structure.

It is exciting to look at the progress that has been made in achieving a system of electronic information flow between the VCCS campuses and the senior institutions. As Internet usage continues to grow and develop on all campuses, the SCT will continue to encourage the development of this medium of communication as a means to ensure the smooth transfer of students. The SCT is prepared to work with each institution to facilitate the development and flow of electronic information. The sub-committee on electronic databases, in particular, is prepared to assist VCCS and senior institutions with the development of an electronic information system on the Internet that will make transfer in Virginia a model for the nation.

Transfer Connection

is a cooperative effort of
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Assessing the Success of Transfer Students

Through a variety of reports and surveys, community colleges have demonstrated that the *State Policy on Transfer* has had a positive effect on the success and satisfaction of students who transfer to Virginia's four-year institutions. The *State Policy* has made easier the process of negotiating articulation agreements, and several four-year institutions now offer guaranteed admissions to graduates of VCCS transfer programs. Colleges have seen evidence of greater general acceptance of courses and programs at both public and private institutions and report decreases in the number of students experiencing difficulty in transferring.

To improve both student success and the transfer process, community colleges analyze data on student performance provided annually by the four-year institutions. Results have been used to improve academic advising and modify course content and sequencing to better meet program requirements at the senior institutions.

Assessment results have also been used to examine trends in student enrollments. A third of the community colleges reported in 1996-97 that an increasing percentage of students transferring to senior institutions are completing an occupational/technical degree program rather than one of the traditional transfer degrees. credit courses offered through the community colleges are also on the rise, signaling a growing interest in more academically challenging course work and better preparation for college.

For a number of reasons, many community college students transfer before completing a two-year degree, but assessment data suggest that associate-degree graduates earn higher grade-point-averages after transferring than students who elect to complete a few select courses before moving to the four-year college. Nationally, transfer shock is well documented in drops of .3 to 1.0 in grade-point-averages in the first year at the senior institution, but in Virginia, community college students recover after the first semester to earn grades in subsequent terms equivalent to their performance at the community college. Assessment results consistently show that over 80% of community college transfer students remain in good academic standing at the four-year college or university.

A number of issues related to adjustment to campus life are still problematic for students who transfer to some of the larger senior institutions. The primary concern seems to be in the accuracy and timeliness of information communicated among students, community colleges, and the four-year colleges and universities. Students sometimes find it difficult to get accurate information, or they are sometimes given advice that is inconsistent with published materials. Transferability of specific courses is not always made clear, and changes in program/course requirements have not always been communicated in a timely way. The State Committee on Transfer, in its action plan for 1997-98, will be addressing ways to improve communication, and more widespread use of the World Wide Web should go a long way to alleviate the problems of accuracy and timely access to transfer information.

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